

SAFETY BRIEFING

BLISTERS

The skin has two layers. The outer one, called the *epidermis*, consists of layers of dead skin cells and contains no nerve cells or blood vessels. The deeper one, the *dermis*, contains both vessels and nerves. When fluid collects between the two layers, a blister is formed.

Blisters can be caused by: **friction** (rubbing or chafing produces friction and heat, which cause a blister to form), **sunburn**, **insect bite**, **viruses** (e.g. chicken pox or shingles), **herpes** simplex virus (cold sores), **bacterial infections** (impetigo, eczema), or by **chemical irritation**. In the most common types of blisters the damage to the deep layer of the skin causes an outflow of fluid from the blood capillaries, which then pools to form blisters under the outer layer of skin.

Blisters can be extremely uncomfortable. But the most common danger from blisters is the possibility of infection if the skin is broken. Treat a friction blister by cooling and cleaning the area. **If the blister becomes infected seek medical help.**

HOW TO AVOID BLISTERS ON FEET:

DO:

- Wear well-fitting footwear. Too tight a shoe allows friction and causes pressure. Too loose a shoe produces friction where the foot slides within the shoe.
- Wear comfortable, substantial footwear for long-distance walking
- Wear additional heavy socks in rigid walking boots
- Choose thick soft socks without ridges or large darns
- Cool, wash and powder feet regularly

DON'T:

- Wear new shoes for the first time on a long walk...break them in gradually
- Choose shoes with internal ridges that rub
- Wear old, harsh or thin socks.